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17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

Disadvantaged children are concentrated in the inner-city area. The school should be concerned that the child's experiences, both at home and at school, help him to realize his capabilities by raising his self-confidence and motivation.

The Detroit Great Cities Program consists of five parts. The first part is concerned with teacher training through workshops and monthly papers. Secondly, materials and equipment are being adapted to the needs and backgrounds of the disadvantaged child. The third part seeks to make class organization more flexible, allowing for longer classes, field trips, and team teaching. Additional staff to work with teachers in subject areas and with student emotional problems, as well as a social worker trained in community organization, contribute to the fourth part of the program. Part five concerns public and private involvement in community-school programs and services. Such involvement includes day camps, library facilities, public health services, teacher assistants, and extensive use of YMCA and YWCA facilities and programs. Approximately 250 evening classes for adults and youth were held last year. The Detroit Project employs a full time evaluator who seeks to evaluate the academic and sociological progress of the participants.

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IMPROVING THE COMPETENCE OF CHILDREN WITH LIMITED BACKGROUNDS

Detroit, March 15, 1962
The Great Cities School Improvement Project

Five years ago, in Atlantic City, superintendents and board members of fourteen large-city (600,000 plus) school systems* met and concluded that immediate steps should be taken to find ways to improve the education of children with limited backgrounds. From this beginning has grown a now-nationwide educational experiment called the Great Cities School Improvement Project.

In Detroit and other large cities across the nation are concentrated families whose children are severely hampered in their schooling by a complex of community, home, and school conditions. To engage the total problem faced by urban educators, we shall make a brief foray into the social pathology which produced it.

Change in the population of the inner cores of most large cities has created areas where the majority of children have extraordinary needs which the public schools are not prepared to meet. Where once the inner city population was typically "all kinds," it has now become typically stratified. The majority of upper and middle income urbanites have removed to the suburbs or to the outer rings of the city. The population that remains is predominantly unskilled or semi-skilled low income racial and ethnic minorities. When representatives of other strata moved out, the vacuum was filled by Southern Appalachian white and southern Negro in-migrants similar in many ways to the low-income minority groups that had remained in the inner city.

Numbers of the city's manufacturing and service industries have followed the upper and middle income exodus. What remains is the glowing downtown section a great multi-story civic and merchandising complex, serviced by expressways and surrounded by miles of slums and "transitional" or "gray" areas, still containing a few pockets of more affluent residential areas and high rent apartment districts.

From these slums and transitional areas come more than one-third of the 3,200,000 children now enrolled in America's fourteen largest school systems. Many of them have limited backgrounds, and most of them are concentrated in the inner city schools.

To meet the special education requirements of the child with limited background, each of the Great Cities has developed and implemented a different program. Through cooperative effort they hope to divide the tasks—the different approaches

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* Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, St. Louis, and Washington.

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which must be tried and evaluated--and share the results. In this way more can be accomplished and learned, in less time. And time is crucial.

In Detroit, the Great Cities Project is working through seven schools*, involving 420 school personnel and 10,400 children and their families. The project budget is composed in part of Board of Education funds, and in part of funds from The Ford Foundation. The total expenditure represents an increase of less than 10% above normal per pupil costs.

The families of these children live for the most part in low-cost public housing, or in overcrowded, substandard-multiple dwellings of every type--or in single and two family homes in neighborhoods which are, in reality, transitional. These neighborhoods do not appear to be slums, but their people are often in difficult straits, and the children reflect this in school.

The families of these children may have resided in Detroit for many years, but most came during and immediately after the Second World War to fill industry's needs for unskilled labor, or are very recent in-migrants from rural areas, particularly rural areas of the Southern states, who shifted from a land of no current or foreseeable opportunity to a land of possible--maybe--opportunity.

The in-migrant comes into a portion of the total community which is fragmented and uncohesive, lacks trained leadership and organization, and physically reflects the low, inconsistent income and the lack of information and skills of its inhabitants. Here, whatever booms or economic upturns may occur in other places, depression never ceases. A job is a will-o-the-wisp.

The family of the child with limited background may have many meritable standards and values. Even when its material well-being is limited to basic necessities, the family may be close-knit with love and caring.

But always, there is a common denominator: not enough. Not enough income, information, skills to get along successfully; no precedent for success; insufficiencies of many sorts. The child reflects this. He is poorly prepared and poorly motivated for school. School has never seemed important to him. Obviously there are some tremendous adjustments to be made.

With a sufficiency of income, information, motivation, and time--in short, in an ideal situation--urban life adjustment might evolve quite pleasantly. But the situation is poor, and many children have little to do except, as one visiting teacher's report put it, "think about the hills of home, go to school each day unprepared and purposeless, and be 'sick to mah stomach from the gas stove'

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Burton Elementary School
Couzens Elementary School
Franklin Elementary School
Marcy Elementary School

Barbour Junior High School
Jefferson Junior High School
Eastern High School

(quote from child) that heats a three-room flat."

The parents of these children are not against education. At worst they see no need for it, are indifferent. Many have hopes and ambitions for their children which involve obtaining a good education. They are glad if their child does well in school, but they often have little formal education themselves, know little about studies or how children learn. They feel that they cannot, in their lack of success, understand how to help the child succeed.

The child with limited background has normal intelligence. He is not different in this respect. He can grow up in school studies and in his life if reached and interested by what the school offers. And yet the typical child with limited background in the typical classroom is indifferent and purposeless, a poor communicator who does not respond to normal teaching methods and subject matter. His capabilities remain unrealized.

Why?

The traditional responsibilities of school staff and objectives of school services are based upon a uniform "Successful American" social and economic pattern and do not obtain effectivcly to the non-uniform social and economic patterns which characterize the neighborhoods from which these children come.

The typical school cannot compensate for the various lacks in the lives of children with limited backgrounds. The typical school does not provide these reinforcements to school learning which, in a stable, middle-income area, are normally provided each child by his home and out-of-school life.

Many of these reinforcements are intangible. They include: an acceptable self-image; knowledge of essentials such as nutrition and health; an implicit sense of identification with a stable family in a stable neighborhood; security and freedom from want, both material and emotional; the self-confidence and motivation to achieve which rub off on the child who is surrounded by things and involved in experiences which are accepted both <u>at home</u> and <u>in school</u> either as symbols of success or significant achievements.

Such positive factors are essential in some form in the growing up of a child. If they are insufficient or lacking, and no compensation is made for them, then the child's ability to learn is impeded or lost.

It seems reasonable that the educator should be concerned with <u>all</u> that affects the child he is trying to educate, and in fact teachers and administrators often informally cross traditional lines and do "unorthodox" things to help children who are not doing well in school. But except through the attendance officer, the public schools, especially the urban public schools, seldom make official organized attempts to alter the "other lives" of children. If the family

does little to help prepare the child for life, and the cultural environment of the child is limited and negative, then the one force left to do the necessary shaping is the school. It must provide more for the child than it normally would, at the same time attempting, with other community services, to revive the family's positive influence and to introduce portions of our culture and our society which tend to equalize the child's limited and negative environment.

The Detroit Great Cities Project is developing and testing a five-part program. Part one is concerned with teacher orientation and training.

Most teachers in inner city schools bring to their work an experiential background entirely different than that of the families whose children they teach. Appropriate changes in teacher perception must occur to insure reasonably objective reactions to child, family, and neighborhood.

These important changes in the perception of teachers occur only as teachers become aware of and are involved in the processes of change which confront children and their families day by day.

The workshop is an effective in-service training tool for providing teachers with useful knowledge to apply in teaching the child with limited background. The Detroit project has used it: to outline the extraordinary needs of the child with limited background, with outstanding consultants in child psychology, sociology, urban renewal, in-migration, and so forth.

A monthly paper, the GCSIP Footnotes, is distributed to all staff-members in the seven project schools. It keeps staff informed of activities in other GCSIP schools, and provides an outlet for articles and materials pertinent to a greater understanding of the child with limited background and his environment.

Part two involves the improved use of instructional equipment and materials and the development of educational materials adapted to the needs of the child with limited background.

One of the difficulties of teaching reading in the primary grades has been to find a primer series which contains words and experiences which the child with limited background can relate to things in his own life.

A committee of reading specialists, together with citizen's and teacher's advisory committees, is working in cooperation with the Follett Publishing Company on a three primer series which may prove to be a radical departure from the standard materials of this nature. In the series, situations and events common to the inner city child's experience are used. Words familiar to him are presented—although usage is different than his might be. Streets are crowded city streets, houses are old (but well-kept) city houses. And some of the faces of the children in the stories are brown, and some are white—an unprecedented realistic touch.

To encourage a home library (in the homes of these children are few books or magazines), books, mostly paperbacks, are purchased on consignment and sold at cost to children and parents.

Three hundred fifty to four hundred dollars has been added to each school's funds to allow teachers to obtain materials which they deem useful, but which are not available through regular procurement channels.

Teachers are encouraged to search out, use, and recommend effective instructional materials. Extensive curriculum change, a very involved and difficult process, is in the discussion-recommendations stage, but as yet actual changes have been minor.

Part three concerns modification of organizational patterns within the school for more flexible and efficient programming to meet individual needs. Team teaching is being tried in three schools with considerable success, and has been abandoned in one school because of limited facilities.

Block-time programming, using study units developed by teachers, has been initiated in the two junior high schools. A non-graded primary unit has been in operation in one school for two years, and testing of child progress shows highly satisfactory results. Another school instituted a non-graded primary in September, 1961, and has extended teacher-pupil continuity to six semesters with many of its elementary class groups.

A pre-school program, begun in one school to discover whether early preparation could offset some of the lacks of the child with limited background, now has "graduates" in the primary grades who are, in most cases, well ahead of peers who had no pre-school experience. Whether that head start will be retained or lost along the way remains to be seen.

One of the most obvious, and perhaps most successful ways to enrich and expand the background of the child is to put him on a bus and take him to places he has never seen and perhaps never heard of.

Approximately 400 bus trips to industry, business and cultural centers were provided the seven schools in 1960-61 (this figure includes trips as part of summer programs--GCP schools operate the year round).

Camping experiences are an expanding activity in the project schools. There are numerous reasons for sending the child with limited background off to the fields and the woods for a few days. Here are three: a camp experience provides an entirely new dimension to a city-oriented life; it offers unique opportunities to teach and learn, especially in the sciences; and it provides an opportunity for teachers and pupils to begin to know and understand each other. Since the teacher is often the only available source of the sort of objective affection and acceptance which the child needs most, a camping experience may be the keystone upon which a child's success in school can be built.

For the three camp experiences (two in the spring and one in the winter, involving approximately 200 sixth-and seventh-graders and fifty staff), students prepared extensively in class, parents were informed and included in preparation and planning. To "earn their way," the students at the two elementary schools, with supervision from school staff and parents, washed cars, mowed lawns, sold cakes and cookies and Christmas trees.

Part four concerns the additional staff assigned to each school, to help classroom teachers and school administrators coordinate home-community, agency, and school resources, and to increase remedial teaching and referral capacity.

Coaching teachers (one per school) have enhanced the work of regular teachers with diagnostic and developmental work in language arts and arithmetic. They have helped approximately 350 children whose disabilities required extensive remedial instruction. It is interesting that these specialists often find that their first task is to develop confidence and motivation in children to whom schoolwork of any kind has been synonomous with defeat and failure.

Full-time visiting teachers (one per school) diagnose and refer emotionally disturbed children and their families to appropriate agencies and specialists for help. As staff working nearly full-time, they are able to identify with other staff, families and children in unique ways which were not possible when they were responsible for many schools.

The school-community agent (one in each elementary school, two in each of the junior and senior high schools) is essentially a social worker trained in community organization. The agent is responsible for implementing the ideal of the community or neighborhood school, serving children, parents and interested neighbors alike. Agents utilize staff and laymen as volunteer and paid after-school and evening instructors and leaders. The agents work with staff in developing a comprehensive enrichment-remedial-recreational summer program. They coordinate the work of community agencies in the school, and develop and renew in appropriate ways community leadership and interest in and use of the school. Informally, the agent is an impartial arbiter of school-family issues, the go-between and open forum for neighborhood opinion.

Part five concerns public and private agency involvement and the development of school-home-community reinforcement activities. The success of a community-school venture in a culturally deprived area depends in large measure on the concentration of Public and Private agency resources and personnel on community-school needs.

Activities in 1960-61 included:

— a day camp for 55 emotionally disturbed children from project schools (with the Neighborhood Service Organization)

-- extensive use of YMCA and YWCA facilities and programs

-- expanded use of public libraries transporting parents and children by shuttle and car, and sending Detroit Public Library Bookmobiles out into the project neighborhoods

-- cooperation with the Detroit Department of Health and the Pilot Club of Detroit, to staff and operate a clinic which will do a complete inventory of physical-nutritional needs of one school's population

-- use of nearly 200 high school and college students as teachers' assistants and club leaders.

-- Project staff involvement in committees and planning groups for urban renewal settlement house work, neighborhood conservation and other community service activities vital to the Great Cities Project.

-- Project staff speeches on school needs and the child with limited background to 220 professional and lay groups in and around Detroit.

The public school is the most logical facility in which the total community may participate in preparing its children for life. In GCSIP schools reinforcement of pupil growth much like that found in a middle-income community is made possible through extensive-intensive use of everyone who can, will, or should be involved in school programs—parents, volunteer and paid staff, public and private agencies, college and university students and professors, business concerns, and interested laymen.

Approximately 250 short and long-term after-school and evening classes for youth and adults took place in the project schools in 1960 and 1961. The courses were meant to be 1.) immediately useful (nutrition and health, preadolescent psychology, how to help your child graduate from high school, millinery, tailoring, carpentry and home repair, 2.) possibly of use in gainful employment (typing and clerical work, hair styling) and 3.) for pleasure and enrichment (current events, travel to far-away places, public speaking and dramatics). Adult and youth classes are reinforced by family night programs, recreational activities, clubs, scouting, urban 4-H, and a cooperative nursery program.

In all programs, formal and informal, school-family contact, keeping the lines of communication open, has helped children to be more effective learners and given parents the positive ability to urge their children to see reasons for learning and to make the most of their years in school.

The Project staff is relating all of its findings, after thorough evaluation, to the areas of teacher training and administrative organization, and expects to provide educators with valuable data concerning, not only effective teaching

situations, but also effective teaching styles, administrative styles, and organizational structures.

The Detroit Project is unique in that it has a full-time evaluator assigned to its staff. In initiating the project in Detroit, it was recognized that programs with proven effect should be continued and extended to schools currently uninvolved in the project--with the stipulation that an expanded program could not exceed an annual ten per cent per student cost increase. Not every part of the project program will remain in use. To meet cost limits, Project staff must analyze statistics and data computed and filed during the five-year run, and use its findings to establish a priority list, top-rating the elements of the Project program which had the most significant effect in increasing school success of the child with limited background. Recommendations from this priority list will become the program used in extended project activities.

All evaluation falls into one of two dimensions. The first is the educational record dimension, based upon a battery of tests measuring change in academic achievement and ability and, to some extent, attitude toward school. Increased test performance indicates application in studies and (probably) a better attitude toward school.

The second dimension is that of sociological measurement and research. Sophisticated instruments have been developed and used to assess the attitudes and perception of teachers, impact of attitudes and perception on teaching style, and effect of teaching style on the school success of the child with limited background. Project staff is working with the School of Social Work, at the University of Michigan to study family types and neighborhood structure, and to analyze administrative style and its effect upon the innovative quality so essential in the style of a good teacher.

What are the "short term" forecasts for the Great Cities Project in Detroit? It is believed that a considerably larger number of children attending project schools will leave them with positive self-images, higher goals, greater scholastic achievement and improved citizenship, more adequately prepared for continuing school or going to work--independent rather than dependent citizens.

It should be stressed that the Detroit Great Cities Project is not unique in its premises or in its purposes. Individual teachers and schools in Detroit and across the nation are striving to meet the needs of the child with limited background. With little organized help, no extra funds, their work has been done with dedication and enthusiasm. Such efforts are inspirational, but they are often a stopgap, and we cannot hope that they will resolve a dilemma which has grown to such proportions that it can be met only with concerted, total-community effort.

Perhaps the most significant thing about the Detroit Great Cities Project, and similar projects in many great cities is that it stands as a statement of

need, as a formal attempt on the part of a Board of Education to establish a structure which has the funds, the personnel and the support to do a thorough job of proving that all children, no matter how difficult their situation may be, can be well-educated and positively motivated.